



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

13 February 2004

EGY42414.FE

Egypt: The treatment of Christians and state protection available to them (1999-February 2004)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Some recent sources indicated that the Egyptian police arrested dozens of Christians, many of whom were new converts from Islam (*Catholic Insight* 1 Jan. 2004; *Times* 1 Nov. 2003; HRWF 30 Oct. 2003). Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF) added that the detainees "were tortured" (ibid.), while *Catholic Insight* reported that they were subjected to "persecution" (1 Jan. 2004). Other converts continue to live in hiding, afraid of being next (*Times* 1 Nov. 2003).

A report published by the United States Department of State noted that the Egyptian government continued to fail to bring to justice those responsible for killing 21 Christians at Al-Kush and that converts from Islam still faced periodic detention and discrimination (*International Religious Freedom Report 2003* 18 Dec. 2003). The Al-Kush incident [Al-Kocheh] dates back to January 2000 (*Country Reports 2002* 31 Mar. 2003, Sec. 1.a; *L'Humanité* 5 Jan. 2000).

While Egyptian law allows religious conversion (*International Religious Freedom Report 2003* 18 Dec. 2003; HRWF 30 Oct. 2003), in practice, "Muslims who become Christians face arrest, torture and ongoing threats to their lives" (ibid.). *Country Reports 2002* indicated that, in Egypt, "[w]omen and Christians faced discrimination based on tradition and some aspects of the law" (31 Mar. 2003, intro.).

An article on the situation of Christians in certain Muslim countries, published on 16 September 2002, stated that:

Egypt treats its Coptic Christian minority as second-class citizens, and is rather less than vigilant about protecting them from attack by Islamic extremists. The Copts dare not complain, figuring they're better off living under the regime of president-for-life Hosni Mubarak than under the extremist Muslim Brotherhood. It's a humiliating choice, but it guarantees their survival, for now (*National Review* 16 Sept. 2002).

Citing an incident in El-Minya, a village located 140 miles south of Cairo where Coptic Orthodox Christians gathering to celebrate mass were attacked by a Muslim mob, HRWF reported in a 12 February 2002 article that the local police did not intervene and that, although the attack began at about 9:00 a.m., police officials did not appear until around 12:30 p.m.

In reaction to the massacre of Christians Al-Kocheh [Al-Kush] in January 2000, Monseigneur Wissa, the bishop of that region, accused [translation] "the government of conspiring against the Copts" and denounced [translation] "the passivity of the police" (*L'Humanité* 5 Jan. 2000).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Catholic Insight . 1 January 2004. "Persecution of Christians in Egypt." (Dialog)

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002 . 31 March 2003. United States Department of State. Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18274.htm>> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2004]

L'Humanité [Paris]. 5 January 2000. François Germain-Robin. "Égypte. Au moins vingt chrétiens massacrés à Al-Kocheh." <<http://www.humanite.presse.fr/journal/2000-01-05/2000-01-05-217764>> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2004]

Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF) [Brussels]. 30 October 2003. Barbara G. Baker. "Egypt Cracks Down Against Converts to Christianity. Former Muslims Forbidden to Change Their Identity Papers." (info@hrwf.net)

_____. 12 February 2002. Barbara G. Baker. "Coptic Church Attacked in Southern Egypt. Security Forces Appear Four Hours Later." (info@hrwf.net)

International Religious Freedom Report 2003 . 18 December 2003. United States Department of State. Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/2003/24448.htm>> [Accessed 9 Feb. 2004]

National Review . 16 September 2002. Rod Dreher. "Do Christians Bleed?: Unreported Persecution in the Muslim World." (Dialog)

Times . 1 November 2003. "General News." (Dialog)

Additional Sources Consulted

Africa Confidential

Dialog

IRB Databases

Resource centre country file. Egypt

Internet sites, including :

Amnesty International

European Country of Origin Information Network (Ecoi.net)

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH)

Minorities at Risk Project

World Organization Against Torture

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.